



## The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Dr. Roberto B. Bryson Symposium sends out a warning on an alarming epidemic

This past Saturday, October 28, the auditorium of the Cas di Cultura hosted a symposium on “Child Obesity,” which is reaching epidemic proportions in Aruba, as in the U.S. and most of the Western World. A panel consisting of doctors from Aruba, Curacao, and the United States, joined by a dietician and wellness expert presented their findings and recommendations regarding this growing problem.

Presided over by Dr. Jay Rajnherc, pediatrician, the symposium consisted of morning and afternoon sessions, with a question and answer period following each session. The morning session saw presentations by Dr. Eric Arends, of Aruba, pediatrician, Dr. Sonia Faries, pediatric endocrinologist and Dr. S.M. Lo-A-Njoe, pediatric cardiologist, both from Curacao. They presented the technical aspects of childhood obesity, and the health problems resulting from this unnatural state. There were several doctors in the audience that also confirmed the findings of the panel as being evidenced in their own practices. They reported an alarming increase in Type 2 Diabetes and beyond is showing up in younger adults, a disease that should not manifest before the age of forty.

Dr. Israel Posner reported that where he used to see one or two cases of Obstructive Sleep Apnea per year, he is now receiving one or two patients *per day* with this ailment. Other doctors also came to the microphone to point out that there is a much higher occurrence of fatty liver tissue, and other health problems that can be directly linked to improper diet and lack of exercise. Studies present by Dr. Faries also raised a question of concern to Arubans because of their genetic make-up that might suggest populations with Indian genealogy are also particularly susceptible to obesity brought on by a fast food franchise diet. There is not conclusive proof of this, but it is suggested by the findings; however, amongst the doctors of the symposium there was a consensus that such a diet is a major factor in this growing problem. Combine that with children spending their time in front of the television or computer instead of doing sports, and you have a formula for disaster.

The morning session presented the problem through scientific studies and their results; the afternoon session consisted of possible answers and featured Christa Bryson, dietician, and Richard Visser, doctor of holistic medicine, both of Aruba, and Dr. W. Sykes, doctor of medicine and psychiatry of New York. Dr. Rajnherc summed up that the greatest hurdle for doctors to attempt to remedy what will result in a huge burden both in manpower and money on the health care system is first getting the public to recognize and acknowledge there is a problem.

In today’s society, where it is common in most households that both parents are working, “fast food” that is cheap and heavy on starches, sugars and fats are often the meal solution of an exhausted parent. A Sunday outing to a fast food franchise is a treat, and children and adults literally become addicted to the food. Busy parents that are trying to get things done during a day off will plop an active child in front of the TV, which has now become a “babysitter” It is a dilemma, which each parent must recognize and try to change for the health of their themselves, and their children.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Dr. Roberto B. Bryson Symposium ended by honoring the man for which it was named, and Dr. Bryson, pediatrician now retired, was presented with a certificate and gold pin in gratitude for twenty-eight years of unstinting service he provided the Aruban community. Even in his recent retirement, he is a beloved member of the community, honored for his devotion to his patients and his contributions to the health care system.